



LIBERIA COUNTRY REPORT

October 2004

Country Information & Policy Unit

**IMMIGRATION AND NATIONALITY DIRECTORATE
HOME OFFICE, UNITED KINGDOM**

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1. Scope of Document

1.1 This Country Report has been produced by Immigration and Nationality Directorate, Home Office, for use by officials involved in the asylum / human rights determination process. The Report provides general background information about the issues most commonly raised in asylum / human rights claims made in the United Kingdom. It includes information available up to 1 September 2004.

1.2 The Country Report is compiled wholly from material produced by a wide range of recognised external information sources and does not contain any Home Office opinion or policy. All information in the Report is attributed, throughout the text, to the original source material, which is made available to those working in the asylum / human rights determination process.

1.3 The Report aims to provide a brief summary of the source material identified, focusing on the main issues raised in asylum and human rights applications. It is not intended to be a detailed or comprehensive survey. For a more detailed account, the relevant source documents should be examined directly.

1.4 The structure and format of the Country Report reflects the way it is used by Home Office caseworkers and appeals presenting officers, who require quick electronic access to information on specific issues and use the contents page to go directly to the subject required. Key issues are usually covered in some depth within a dedicated section, but may also be referred to briefly in several other sections. Some repetition is therefore inherent in the structure of the Report.

1.5 The information included in this Country Report is limited to that which can be identified from source documents. While every effort is made to cover all relevant aspects of a particular topic, it is not always possible to obtain the information concerned. For this reason, it is important to note that information included in the Report should not be taken to imply anything beyond what is actually stated. For example, if it is stated that a particular law has been passed, this should not be taken to imply that it has been effectively implemented; rather that information regarding implementation has not been found.

1.6 As noted above, the Country Report is a collation of material produced by a number of reliable information sources. In compiling the Report, no attempt has been made to resolve discrepancies between information provided in different source documents. For example, different source documents often contain different versions of names and spellings of individuals, places and political parties etc. Country Reports do not aim to bring consistency of spelling, but to reflect faithfully the spellings used in the original source documents. Similarly, figures given in different source documents sometimes vary and these are simply quoted as per the original text.

1.7 The Country Report is based substantially upon source documents issued during the previous two years. However, some older source documents may have been included because they contain relevant information not available in more recent documents. All sources contain information considered relevant at the time this

Report was issued.

1.8 This Country Report and the accompanying source material are public documents. All Country Reports are published on the IND section of the Home Office website and the great majority of the source material for the Report is readily available in the public domain. Where the source documents identified in the Report are available in electronic form, the relevant web link has been included, together with the date that the link was accessed. Copies of less accessible source documents, such as those provided by government offices or subscription services, are available from the Home Office upon request.

1.9 Country Reports are published every six months on the top 20 asylum producing countries and on those countries for which there is deemed to be a specific operational need. Inevitably, information contained in Country Reports is sometimes overtaken by events that occur between publication dates. Home Office officials are informed of any significant changes in country conditions by means of Country Information Bulletins, which are also published on the IND website. They also have constant access to an information request service for specific enquiries.

1.10 In producing this Country Report, the Home Office has sought to provide an accurate, balanced summary of the available source material. Any comments regarding this Report or suggestions for additional source material are very welcome and should be submitted to the Home Office as below.

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2. Geography

2.1 The Europa Regional Surveys: Africa South of the Sahara 2004 (Europa) noted that the Republic of Liberia is a coastal West African state of approximately 97,754 sq kms, bordered by Sierra Leone to the west, the Republic of Guinea to the north and Côte d'Ivoire to the east. The CIA World Factbook noted that as of May 2004, Liberia was divided into "15 counties; Bomi, Bong, Gbarpolu, Grand Bassa, Grand Cape Mount, Grand Gedeh, Grand Kru, Lofa, Margibi, Maryland, Montserrado, Nimba, River Cess, River Gee, Sinoe". [1](p 601)[6](p 4) Europa also noted that the capital is Monrovia. The country itself is flat and densely forested, and consists of a wide coastal plain, with several low-lying hill ranges inland. Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) estimated that the population in mid-2004 was 3.36m. Liberia experiences two distinct rainy seasons in the south of the country, but in the north, only one from May to October, the climate is generally hot and humid throughout the year. The population is divided into 16 main indigenous tribal groups, plus groups of non-tribal Liberians and non-Liberian Africans. [1](pp 601 & 619)[4b](p 3)

3. Economy

3.1 US State Department's Report on Human Rights Practices (USSD) covering 2003 stated "An estimated 80 percent of the population lived on less than \$1 per day. The country also had an unemployment rate of at least 70 percent. Most of the population in urban areas survived on income generated through the informal sector, predominantly consisting of "buying and selling" clothing and household effects. Extensive looting fueled the informal economy." [2a](p 2) The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) in its Country Report on Liberia dated June 2004, reported "The exchange rate against the US dollar has halved since the height of the crisis in mid-2003, to L\$40 [Liberian Dollars] :US\$1, as currency shortages have dissipated (remittances are expected to remain strong). In 2004-05 the exchange rate will be supported by several factors: regular donor inflows, relatively large capital investment inflows, strong remittances and a fall in capital flight (of US dollars)." [4a](p 10)

3.2 The EIU Report noted:

"Following a visit to Liberia by the IMF [International Monetary Fund] in December 2003, on March 25th [2004] the IMF published its findings from that visit in *Liberia: Report on post-conflict economic situation and prospects for January-June 2004, staff report*. The report provided a resumé of recent events in Liberia, where the hostilities experienced in 2003 worsened an already dire economic situation, causing real GDP [Gross Domestic Product] to contract by an estimated 30%. However, the IMF noted that the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL) has made progress in implementing measures (announced in October 2003, when it came into being) to strengthen revenue collection and resume an orderly budget process. The centralisation of revenue collection at the Ministry of Finance has ended practices whereby government agencies levied and retained taxes and fees themselves. This has led to an increase in average monthly collections to US\$5m in the period October 2003-January 2004, three times more than the monthly collections in the third quarter of 2003. Revenue

collection is expected to be strengthened in the first half of 2004 by the expansion of the general sales tax on easily collectable goods and services, including restaurant and cell phone services, as well as through an overhaul of import and excise taxes, including a comprehensive review of current tax exemptions. Import inspection should also be rationalised and carried out by the Bureau of Inspection, Valuation, Assessment and Control (BIVAC), rather than the eight separate agencies currently involved, in order to reduce opportunities for diversion.” [4a](p 17)

The EIU report further noted “The NTGL has also liberalised rice imports, a source of rent seeking under the former president, Charles Taylor. Steps have also been taken to fully liberalise petroleum product imports An exercise to purge ghost workers from the public-sector payroll is expected to be concluded shortly, and comprehensive audits of the major revenue-generating agencies and the Central Bank of Liberia (CBL) are being prepared, with foreign assistance.” [4a](p 17)

4. History

4.1 The Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) in their country profile on Liberia dated 12 January 2004, noted “Liberia is the only West African country not to have been colonised. It was established as an independent state by freed slaves from America in 1847. The UK [United Kingdom] was the first country to recognise its status as an independent state. The constitution is loosely based on that of the US. For more than 130 years after independence, politics were dominated by descendants of the original settlers, known as the Americo-Liberians.” The FCO added “On Christmas Eve 1989, the National Patriotic Forces of Liberia (NPFL), led by the warlord Charles Taylor, began a revolt which quickly became an ethnically-based civil war between the Krahn and Mandingo dominated Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL), and the Gio and Mano NPFL. The conflict led to the collapse of the Doe dictatorship and his execution in 1990 by an offshoot of the NPFL.” [3](p 1-2) The USSD background note on Liberia of June 2004 noted “The 1989-1996 Liberian civil war, which was one of Africa's bloodiest, claimed the lives of more than 200,000 Liberians and further displaced a million others into refugee camps in neighboring countries ”The USSD, in the same document, also stated “Special elections were held on July 19, 1997, with Charles Taylor and his National Patriotic Party [NPP] emerging victorious. Taylor won the election by a large majority, primarily because Liberians feared a return to war had Taylor lost.” [2c](p 3)

4.2 The FCO in their profile also noted “In 1999 fighting began in the north west of Liberia between President Taylor's armed forces and militias, and the rebel group, Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD). LURD was a coalition of dissident groups operating out of Guinea. Its aim was to overthrow Charles Taylor. Guinea denied supporting LURD. But in October 2003 President Conté declared that Guinea was no longer providing support to LURD.” The FCO added “In January 2002 fighting escalated, spreading throughout northern and western Liberia, including to the outskirts of the capital, Monrovia. At this time, the rebel group, Movement of Democracy for Liberia (MODEL) emerged in eastern Liberia. This was made up of disaffected Liberians, mercenaries and former LURD fighters mainly from the Krahn ethnic group. MODEL's objective was to depose Taylor”, the FCO

also noted “On 14 August [2003] President Taylor went into exile in Calabar, Nigeria and handed over power to his vice President Moses Blah to form an interim government.” [3](p 2)

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5. State Structures

The Constitution

5.1 Europa Regional Surveys: Africa South of the Sahara 2004 (Europa) and the US State Department’s Report on Human Rights Practices (USSD) covering 2003, reflect that the Liberian Constitution came into effect on 6 January 1986, after being approved by a national referendum in July 1984. Liberia is a unitary state, with three separate branches of government, the legislative, the executive and the judiciary. The Constitution provides for certain fundamental human rights, and is supported by a theoretically independent judiciary. The USSD stated that “Liberia is a republic. The Constitution provides for three branches of government—executive, legislative and judicial—but there has been no effective system of checks and balances, and presidents traditionally have wielded extraordinary power”. The same report details many human rights abuses committed by those in authority, and others, during 2003. [1](p 623)[2a](pp 1-27)

Citizenship

5.2 The requirements for citizenship are set out in chapter IV of the Liberian Constitution. Citizenship would appear to be acquired by descent from a Liberian citizen. Dual nationals must, upon reaching maturity, renounce any other citizenship that they may hold by descent from a foreign national. There is limited information regarding the acquisition of citizenship, but naturalisation is referred to in the Constitution. [17b](pp 1-2)

5.3 USSD noted “Although the Constitution prohibits ethnic discrimination, it also provides that only “persons who are Negroes or of Negro descent” may be citizens or own land. Many persons of Lebanese and Asian descent who were born or have lived most of their lives in the country were denied full rights as a result of this racial distinction.” [2a](p 24)

Political System

5.4 The USSD stated:

“The Constitution provides for the right to vote in free and fair elections, and citizens exercised this right in 1997 in elections that international observers deemed administratively free and transparent; however, the elections were conducted in an atmosphere of intimidation, because most voters believed that military forces loyal to Taylor would have resumed the civil war if he lost. Since his election in 1997, President Taylor used intimidation, patronage, and

corruption to maintain power. Because the legislative elections were held on the basis of proportional representation, Taylor's NPP [National Patriotic Party] won control of the legislature by the same 75 percent majority that he received in the popular vote for the presidency." In light of conditions within Liberia, elections scheduled for October 2003 were postponed, and it is intended that the next elections will be held in October 2005."

[2a](p 20)[14a](pp 12&13)

5.5 According to a UN Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) article, on 11 August 2003 President Taylor stood down from Office. He left Liberia on the same day to take up residence in Nigeria. His Vice President Moses Zeh Blah replaced him as interim President, pending the formation of a transitional government. [5b](p 1-3)

5.6 Several US Government and UK Foreign Office sources reflect that on 14 October 2003, Gyude Bryant, a former Liberian businessman, was inaugurated as Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL), with Wesley Johnson as vice-chairman. The NTGL has 21 ministries, with 5 each going to representatives from the previous Liberian Government, the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (MODEL); both these groups were opposed to President Taylor's rule. The remaining seats were allocated to other political parties. The NTGL will remain in power until October 2005, when it is intended that full elections will be held.

[2a](p 1)[3](p 2)[12a](p 1)

5.7 In May 2004, the UN Secretary-General in his progress report on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), noted the following:

"In all the assessments made by the monitoring mechanisms, it was noted that both the National Transitional Government of Liberia and the National Transitional Legislative Assembly [the NTGL's legislative body] are making sincere efforts to discharge their statutory responsibilities. The major issue of appointments to the Transitional Government, which had hitherto strained relations between Chairman Bryant and the armed factions and made it difficult for the Transitional Government to function smoothly, has been largely resolved. The ECOWAS [Economic Community of West African States] chief mediator, General Abdulsalami Abubakar, visited Monrovia in April [2004] and facilitated a rapprochement between Chairman Bryant and the Speaker of the Legislative Assembly, and the latter began the process of confirming nominees to the 81 assistant ministerial and other executive positions in the Transitional Government, which had previously been an issue of dispute. The 21-member Cabinet of the Transitional Government was formally sworn in on 23 March [2004] and has since met regularly. However, two seats in the Legislative Assembly remain vacant because of ongoing disagreements among the relevant stakeholders in Grand Kru County and the All Liberian Coalition Party." [18f](p 4)

5.8 The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) in a Country Report on Liberia dated June 2004, noted:

"In mid-May [2004] the chairman of the National Transitional Government of

Liberia (NTGL), Gyudeh Bryant, rejected an earlier demand by some LURD leaders to dismiss the finance minister, Luseni Kamara, a LURD appointee under the power-sharing agreement reached at Accra in August 2003 LURD's National Executive Committee (NEC) had called for the replacement of Mr Kamara with the cabinet director, Soko Sackor, following a division in the movement over what many LURD members believe was a unilateral appointment. The issue has blown up because of attempts by some senior LURD members to wrestle control of the organisation from Damante Sekou Conneh (who led LURD's fight against Mr Taylor). His opponents want Ayesha Keita Conneh, Mr Conneh's wife, to lead the organisation, owing to Mr Conneh's ineffectiveness as leader The main grievance against him is that he failed to reward senior fighters for their military successes against the Taylor regime. Mr Conneh is seen as more distant from the rank-and-file than his wife, and more of a political player, but not necessarily well connected. The majority of LURD positions in the NTGL have been given to relatives and supporters of Mr Conneh." [4a](p 13)

5.9 The EIU Country Report of 2004 also noted:

"Mr Bryant said that the replacement of the finance minister would set a precedent for other parties within the NTGL to submit endless lists of replacements of their respective nominees serving in the government. LURD had threatened not to co-operate with the disarmament process and the NTGL if Mr Bryant refused its demand, but it appears that the group has now backed down. LURD issued a statement saying that following the refusal of Mr Bryant to dismiss Mr Kamara, LURD will not co-operate with the NTGL but will not boycott the NTGL and will continue to encourage its militias to disarm to UNMIL. What is clear is that it appears that LURD's NEC is gradually disintegrating, which bodes ill for the prospects of the NTGL continuing to work. The acting minister of defence and member of the LURD NEC, Joe Wylie, who initially called for Mr Kamara's removal, evidently changed his mind. It is not immediately clear why he did so." [4a](pp 13&14)

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Judiciary

5.10 The USSD stated the following:

"Although the Constitution provides for an independent judiciary, judges were subjected to political, social, familial, and financial pressures, and the judiciary was corrupt. Some judges and magistrates were not lawyers. The judiciary has determined that it was not feasible to retire all judicial personnel who were not legally trained. By statute, members of the bar must be graduates of a law school and pass the bar examination. During President Taylor's administration, the executive branch continued to exert strong influence on the judiciary. For example, the Government's assertion that persons identified as "illegal combatants" have no recourse to civil courts appeared to have no basis in law. There were no reports that the NTGL exerted influence on the

judiciary.” [2a](p 9)

The USSD went on to state “Courts regularly received bribes or other illegal gifts out of damages that they awarded in civil cases. Defense attorneys often suggested that their clients pay a gratuity to appease judges, prosecutors, and police officers to secure favorable rulings.” [2a](p 9)

5.11 According to the USSD:

“The judiciary is divided into four levels, with the Supreme Court at the apex. All levels of the court system in Monrovia, including the Supreme Court, functioned sporadically. The Government was unable to revitalize the court system outside of Monrovia due to the war and a lack of trained personnel, a lack of infrastructure, and inadequate funding. Although judges were assigned throughout the country, in some cases they were unable to hold court due to the war, lack of supplies, and lack of equipment.” [2a](p 9)

5.12 The USSD stated “Clan chieftains continued to use the traditional practice of trial-by-ordeal to resolve criminal cases in rural areas. The Supreme Court ruled that trial-by-ordeal--commonly the placement of a heated metal object on a suspect's body in an attempt to determine whether the defendant is telling the truth--is unconstitutional; however, the practice continued under an executive order.” [2a](p 6)

5.13 The USSD also noted:

“Under the Constitution, defendants have due process rights; however, in practice these rights were not always observed. Defendants have the right to a public trial and timely consultation with an attorney; however, there was no effective system to provide public defenders, especially in rural areas. Some local NGOs [Non –Governmental Organisations] provided legal services to indigents and others who have no representation. There continued to be long delays in deciding cases involving juveniles.” [2a](p 9)

Legal Rights/Detention

5.14 According to the USSD:

“The Constitution provides for the rights of the accused, including warrants for arrests and the right of detainees either to be charged or released within 48 hours. Warrants were not always based on sufficient evidence, and detainees, particularly those without the means to hire a lawyer, often were held for more than 48 hours without charge. The police only have limited logistics and forensic capabilities and cannot adequately investigate many crimes, including murder cases. When the courts released known criminals for lack of evidence, police officers often arrested them again on false charges.” [2a](pp 7-8)

5.15 The USSD stated “The Constitution provides for the right of a person who is charged to receive an expeditious trial; however, lengthy pretrial and pre-arraignment detention remained serious problems. In some cases, the length of the

pretrial detention equalled or exceeded the length of sentence for the crime.” [2a](p 8)
The report also noted “There were fewer reports of arbitrary arrest and detention after the NTGL came into power.” [2a](p 7)

Death Penalty

5.16 As noted in Amnesty International’s (AI) Country Report covering 2003, Liberia retains the death penalty, but there have been no reports of it being used in recent years. [15a](p 1)

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Internal Security

5.17 According to a British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) profile of 10 June 2003, LURD is the main group that opposed the Taylor regime. LURD is reported to be backed by Guinea, and has received arms and supplies from there. LURD is mostly based in the north of the country, particularly around Lofa County, and the northern Mandingo tribe is reported to be supporting it. Another group, which was opposed to Taylor’s rule, is MODEL, this is a southern-based organisation, backed by the Côte d’Ivoire, and the Krahn tribe. These groups are loosely organised, and so it is possible that members of other tribal groups could also be supporters. [7a](pp 1-2)

5.18 The EIU, in its Liberian country profile of July 2004, supported this view of these groups, it noted “Model (sic) was strongly supported by Côte d’Ivoire; its members are mostly ethnic Krahns, like those of another civil war faction, Ulimo-J [United Liberation Movement for Democracy]. LURD, on the other hand, was heavily backed by Guinea. It is dominated by members of the Mandingo (Malinké) ethnic group, which also constituted most of Ulimo-K during the 1990s, and was formed in April 1999 when several veteran Taylor opponents in Ulimo-K reorganised themselves as LURD.” [4b](p 7)

5.19 The USSD stated the following:

“On August 4 [2003], the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) sent a peacekeeping force, ECOMIL [ECOWAS Mission in Liberia], to the country to serve as an interpositional force between government and rebel forces [LURD and MODEL]. On August 11 [2003], President Taylor resigned, and fled into exile in Nigeria. In accordance with the Constitution, Vice President Moses Blah became President. On August 18 [2003], a Comprehensive Peace Accord (CPA) was signed in Accra, Ghana, that formed the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL). On October 1 [2003], the U.N. commenced a peacekeeping operation in the country (UNMIL) to support the peace process set forth in the August 18 [2003] CPA.” [2a](p 1)

According to an IRIN article of 11 August 2003, and an AI news release of 12 August 2003, President Taylor is also facing an indictment by the Special Court in Sierra Leone for crimes against humanity. This is because of his support for the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), during the civil war in that country. [5b](pp 1-3)[15b](p 1)

5.20 A program of disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration (DDR) has been set up to assist former combatants reintegration into society. The EIU in its Country Report on Liberia dated June 2004, noted:

“Some controversy remains over the numbers involved in the disarmament, demobilisation and re-integration (DDR) programmes. The Liberian authorities claim that the official estimate of 38,000 fighters is too low. Moses Jarbo, head of the Liberian Disarmament and Demobilisation Commission, maintains that the true number of fighters is 55,000-60,000, a figure which some observers in the international community believe is greatly inflated—they consider the number of active fighters to be as low as 10,000-15,000, with others accounted for by camp followers and families. It is arguable whether all those included in the inflated numbers should receive the same benefits as combatants, especially given the resentment many civilians already feel at the favourable treatment given to those seen as the perpetrators of violence, although many also feel that it is a necessary price to pay for peace.” [4a](p 12)

5.21 The EIU Report continued:

“Combatants are reportedly satisfied with the package they have received, which combines payment, clothes, blankets and food rations, along with screening and registration for future programmes. The UN administration is also pleased with the initial success, particularly after the fiasco in December [2003] when the programme was started hastily with inadequate preparations. Adequate funding seems to be in place—there was concern earlier that not enough was going to be forthcoming to conduct the DDR programmes—with the US planning a total contribution of US\$50m, Japan giving US\$3.6m specifically for child soldiers and the EU [European Union] having already donated €4.15m (US\$4.98m) to the UN-administered Trust Fund for Disarmament. Plans are also progressing for post-demobilisation activities, with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) signing a US\$28m, three-year contract with Creative Associates (a US firm) for a community-based rehabilitation programme. The programme initially provides food and payment of US\$2 per day to ex-combatants working on the renovation of roads, clinics, hospitals and schools, as well as recreational facilities for their spare time. The difficult issues of reintegration and reconciliation have not yet been tackled effectively, however. Insufficient preparatory work has been undertaken in communities, which remain understandably wary of those who were directly involved in perpetrating violence.” [4a](pp 12&13)

5.22 IRIN noted that by mid July 2004, it was reported that over 54,000 former combatants had disarmed. However, some of these are reported as being non-combatants, and the quantity of weapons handed in has been less than anticipated. Another worrying development was the reported smuggling of arms into neighbouring countries, which may increase the risk of these countries becoming destabilised. This activity appeared to be the acts of individuals, who were seeking to profit through arms trading, rather than organised groups with a political agenda. [5c](p 1)[5d](p 1)

5.23 EIU in its Country Report of June 2004 added:

“Insecurity remains a problem, particularly in rural areas upcountry, with flare-ups of violence and looting experienced in recent months in Buchanan, Gbarnga and Harbel, as well as other areas, although this may tail off now owing to the reduction in the number of weapons in circulation. UNMIL has nearly reached its full strength, with 14,496 of the 15,000 planned UN soldiers having arrived as of end-March, but deployment is still not complete, with gaps in evidence, particularly beyond the main roads as well as in Maryland county in the south-east where Model (sic) fighters are still at large. However, a recent assessment trip to look into allegations of military training in Nimba county by former government loyalists returned with no evidence of any activity, an encouraging sign. Although incidents of armed robbery and harassment have greatly decreased, UNMIL is also planning a major cordon and search operation in the capital, Monrovia, once the disarmament exercise is complete in order to collect the many weapons reportedly still circulating in the city.”

[4a](p 13)

Border security and relations with neighbouring countries

5.24 The Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) in their country profile on Liberia dated 12 January 2004 noted “The Mano River Union (MRU) was formed in 1973 to establish a customs and economic union between Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Subsequently, members signed a mutual non-aggression pact and pledged to establish a permanent mechanism for conflict prevention. Despite this, relations between the three countries have not always been easy and the MRU has failed to live up to its original ideals.” [3](p 3) The FCO’s profile added “For years there has been tension and conflict between Liberia and Guinea. Between August 2000 and April 2001 forces loyal to President Taylor attacked and blighted much of southern Guinea. Guinea responded robustly. Liberia accused Guinea of sponsoring the LURD, Guinea denied this.” [3](p 3)

5.25 The FCO in their country profile also stated “Liberia involved itself in the later stages of the uprising in Côte d'Ivoire. Liberian troops, militia groups and mercenaries have been involved in fighting looting and human rights abuses in the west of Côte d'Ivoire. Liberian civilians fleeing the conflict have faced reprisals from the Ivorian population.” [3](p 3)

5.26 EIU in its Country Report on Liberia dated June 2004, was of the view:

“Relations with the international community and within the region are likely to improve considerably with the demise of Mr Taylor's government. Developing the contacts made so far by Mr Bryant with the other leaders of the Mano River Union (which comprises Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone) will remain a priority, but the recent re-election of Lansana Conté as president of Guinea (he is a key backer of LURD) could pose problems for co-operation. Moreover, despite redoubled efforts to resolve the Ivorian crisis, events in Côte d'Ivoire will continue to affect Liberia's eastern border area. The demise of Mr Taylor's regime has seen a re-engagement with donors, particularly the US and the EU, which will continue, but donor support will be conditional upon continued progress with the peace process and improved governance.” [4a](p 7)

Prisons and Prison conditions

5.27 According to the USSD:

“Prison conditions remained harsh and in some cases life threatening. There were credible reports of unofficial detention facilities, including one at the Executive Mansion, in which detainees were held without charge and in some cases tortured. The Government did not provide detainees or prisoners with adequate food or medical care. Cells at Monrovia Central Prison were overcrowded, mostly with detainees awaiting trial. Similar conditions existed in the Barclay Training Center military stockade. In some counties, the structure that serves as a jail is a container with bars at one end. There also were reports that local officials forced prisoners to work for them.” [2a](pp 6-7)

The USSD also reported that since the NTGL came to power there have been no reports of unofficial detention facilities, and that “At year's end [2003], there were no political prisoners.” [2a](pp 8&9)

5.28 The USSD stated “Women, who constituted approximately 5 percent of the prison population, were held in separate cells. Their conditions were comparable to those of the male prisoners and detainees. There were no separate facilities for juvenile offenders. Women and particularly juveniles were subject to abuse by guards or other inmates. Convicted prisoners and detainees awaiting trial were not held in separate facilities.” [2a](p 7)

5.29 The USSD stated that “The Government generally permitted the independent monitoring of prison conditions by local human rights groups, the media, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The ICRC often was allowed to visit persons held in prison facilities and police detention centers without third parties present and to make regular repeat visits, including to Gbatala [a security-training base where torture and other abuses had been reported]. Access generally was denied to unofficial detention centers.” [2a](p 7)

5.30 In May 2004, the UN Secretary-General in his progress report on the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), noted the following:

“The UNMIL corrections component continues to work with the Ministry of Justice and local and international non-governmental organizations on the development of the correctional system in Liberia. Monrovia Central Prison opened on 24 March [2004], with 19 cells refurbished by ICRC. While it is far from being an ideal facility, the opening was intended to relieve some of the crowding at police holding cells in Monrovia. Unfortunately, with the opening of the prison came a significant number of new detainees. There are currently only four functioning prisons in Liberia: Monrovia Central, Bondiway, Kakata Central and Saniquellie. Each is still substandard and understaffed. Police holding cells continue to be used to house court detainees where no prison exists. Policies are in place requiring the separation of women and children; however, separate facilities for these groups do not exist. The National

Transitional Government of Liberia continues to struggle with the provision of food, medical care and transport of prisoners. Temporary assistance provided by international agencies has helped to provide care for prisoners. Forty-five staff have been trained as interim correctional officers. This number is insufficient, but individuals are unwilling to work for the current government salaries. Work has also commenced on a penal reform development plan.” [18f](p 8)

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Armed forces

5.31 The USSD stated:

“During the Taylor administration, the regular security forces included: The Armed Forces of Liberia (AFL); the Liberia National Police (LNP), which had primary responsibility for internal security; the LNP Special Operations Division (SOD); the Antiterrorist Unit (ATU), composed of an elite special forces group consisting of foreign nationals from Burkina Faso and the Gambia, as well as former Revolutionary United Front (RUF) combatants from Sierra Leone; and the Special Security Service (SSS), a large, heavily armed executive protective force. The NTGL dissolved the ATU and the SOD. There also were numerous irregular security services attached to certain key ministries and parastatal corporations, who did not belong to a permanent, organized military force and whose responsibilities appeared to be poorly defined. Other militia elements consisted primarily of young soldiers who were armed but not trained. These irregulars were the primary fighters during the conflict and the first line of defense--or offense--for the Government. During the year [2003], several thousand government security forces were deployed in northern and southeastern counties fighting LURD and MODEL. As fighting intensified, security forces frequently acted independently of government authority, particularly in rural areas. Members of the security forces committed numerous, serious human rights abuses.” [2a](pp 1-2)

5.32 The USSD stated that all sides during the civil conflict forcibly recruited children. Some of these were employed as soldiers, or in a support capacity. The precise figure is hard to gauge, but a recent Amnesty International report estimated that there were 21,000 children, of both sexes, who had served in one faction or another. Provision for the re-integration into society remains limited, but NGOs are beginning to deploy to address this need. [2a](p 23)[15c](pp 1,2,16&17) An IRIN report dated 21 July 2004, noted that in spite of the reduction in violence, there have been reports that the recruitment of children is continuing. It is possible that these children are being recruited to fight in Guinea, but there is limited detailed information. [5c](p 1)

Military Service

5.33 The War Resisters International (WRI) survey of 1998, indicated that there is no conscription in Liberia. However, The USSD, and an IRIN article of 9 June 2003, noted that both rebel and Government militias have forcibly recruited people into

their ranks, and these recruits have included children. [2a](p 23)[5a](p.1)[9]

Medical Services

5.34 Europa Regional Surveys: Africa South of the Sahara 2004 (Europa) and a World Health Organisation (WHO) report of November 2003, indicated that the medical infrastructure remains under-funded and under-resourced. The health system had already been damaged by years of civil conflict, and was in a poor state of repair, prior to the latest upsurge in violence. [1](p 612)[8] The WHO report and a US Agency for International Development (USAID) Report of 3 February 2004 stated that the situation remains poor, even in areas where it is relatively peaceful. There have been outbreaks of disease throughout the country, and this can be attributed to a lack of basic resources, and many Liberians still depended on NGOs for basic medical care. UNMIL has provided some assistance with opening up local health care centres, and identifying the needs of the local population, but this is very limited. [8][12b] According to a UN Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Report of 2004, infant mortality and maternal mortality rates are high, and life expectancy is low. [11]

5.35 The EIU in its Liberian country profile of July 2004, stated:

“According to World Bank estimates for 2002, life expectancy has risen again, to 47 years (the same as the average for Sub-Saharan Africa). The UN Development Programme's Human Development Report 2004 put life expectancy at birth at 41.4 years during the period 2000-05. The mortality rate for children under five years old remains extremely high, at an estimated 235 per 1,000 live births in 2002, according to the report. The World Bank presently estimates a ratio of only 0.2 doctors per 10,000 people in post-war Liberia. Malnutrition and disease, including cholera and yellow fever, have been rife. Since the end of the conflict, the government, with the assistance of donors, has rehabilitated a number of clinics and hospitals, though healthcare provision remains rudimentary.” [4b](pp 18-19)

The UN Development Programme's Human Development Report 2004, records little improvement during 2003 in its quoted development indicators. [11]

5.36 The EIU in its Liberian country profile of July 2004, noted:

“In a statement issued to the 26th special session of the UN General Assembly on HIV/AIDS in June 2001, the then Liberian health minister, Peter Coleman, put Liberia's HIV/AIDS prevalence rate at 8.2%. According to the UN programme on AIDS and HIV (UNAIDS) in Monrovia, 4% of women attending antenatal clinics tested positive for HIV in 1992 and 1993. In 1996 and 1997 HIV testing at various sites found no evidence of HIV infection among antenatal clinic attendees. In 1999, however, at an unspecified site, 12.7% of antenatal clinic attendees were found to be HIV-positive. These figures are likely to be an under-reporting of the true extent of the problem. UNAIDS estimates that 100,000 adults and children were HIV-infected at end-2003. There has been no update of these data as of July 2004. This lack of

data is not surprising given the general low level and quality of official domestic data across the economy.” [4b](p 19)

5.37 The EIU in its Liberian country profile of July 2004, also noted:

“The National Aids Control Programme, supported by limited assistance from China and France, has undertaken a number of HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention campaigns over recent years. However, with lawlessness in some northern counties—due to rebel incursions—rape and sexual promiscuity are thought to have increased HIV infection rates. In addition, returnees from the conflicts in Guinea and Sierra Leone (both refugees and soldiers) will have helped to spread the pandemic.” [4b](p 19)

People with disabilities

5.38 According to the USSD:

“As a result of the civil wars, a large number of persons had permanent disabilities, in addition to those disabled by accident or illness. It is illegal to discriminate against persons with disabilities; however, in practice they did not enjoy equal access to public buildings or government services. No laws mandate accessibility to public buildings or services. Persons with disabilities faced discrimination, particularly in rural areas. Babies with deformities often were abandoned. Some NGOs provided services to persons with disabilities.” [2a](p 24)

Educational System

5.39 Europa states that primary and secondary education is free, and officially compulsory between the ages of 6 and 16 years. However, the closure or disruption of educational institutions during the civil conflict has deprived many children of even the most basic education. [1](p 628)

5.40 The USSD stated:

“The Government generally was unable to provide for the education and health of children. Due to the poor condition of government schools, many children who attended school, particularly in Monrovia, went to private institutions. Since many private schools still needed to be refurbished due to wartime damage, school fees remained relatively high, thereby making education unattainable for many school-age children. In both public and private schools, families of children often were asked to provide their own books, pencils, paper, and even desks. In November [2003], UNICEF [United Nations Children’s Fund] launched a “Back to School” campaign, which began when schools in Monrovia opened for the first time since the June fighting, and provided books, pens, and other teaching materials to children. In 2001 1.05 million out of an estimated 1.7 million school-age children, less than half of whom were girls, were enrolled in primary and secondary schools.

Expenditures on education were estimated at \$2.4 million (167 million Liberian Dollars). In 2000 the literacy rate was 70 percent for boys and 37 percent for girls.” [2a](p 23)

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6. Human Rights

6.A Human Rights Issues

Overview

6.1 A brief outline of the human rights situation was given in the US State Department’s Report on Human Rights Practices (USSD) covering 2003:

“Prior to the resignation of President Taylor, the Government's human rights record remained poor, and it continued to commit numerous, serious abuses. The security forces committed many unlawful killings, including possible summary executions, and they were accused of the disappearances of numerous persons, particularly ethnic Mandingos suspected of antigovernment sympathies. Security forces frequently tortured, beat, and otherwise abused or humiliated citizens. Prison conditions remained harsh and sometimes life threatening. Impunity was a serious problem. The Government investigated some of the alleged abuses by the security forces; however, abusers rarely were charged or disciplined. Security forces continued to use arbitrary arrest and detention, and lengthy pretrial detention remained common. The judicial system was unable to ensure citizens' rights to due process and a fair trial. In some rural areas where the judiciary had not been reestablished, clan chieftains administered criminal justice through the traditional practice of trial-by-ordeal; authorities tacitly condoned this practice. Security forces violated citizens' privacy rights. The Government restricted freedom of speech and of the press; it detained, threatened, and intimidated journalists. Security forces restricted freedom of movement. Ritualistic killings also persisted. Security forces frequently harassed human rights monitors. Violence and discrimination against women remained problems. The welfare of children widely remained neglected, and female genital mutilation (FGM) continued to be practiced. Societal ethnic discrimination remained widespread, ethnic differences continued to generate violence and political tensions, and the Taylor administration continued to discriminate against groups that had opposed Taylor in the civil war, particularly the Mandingo and the Krahn ethnic groups. Forced labor persisted in rural areas. Child labor remained widespread, and there were reports of forced child labor. There were reports of trafficking.” [2a](pp 2-3)

6.2 The United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office stated in its country profile of January 2004 that “President Taylor's regime was contemptuous of democratic principles and human rights. Taylor used the escalating conflict in Liberia to justify increased repression. Arbitrary arrests, forced conscription and the reported

torture and murder of suspected dissident sympathisers, human rights campaigners and journalists became commonplace. The continuing disregard for human rights where civil conflict still exists is of concern. The warring factions have used sexual violence and torture as weapons; used child soldiers and involved children in the conflict. This continues to be a problem in the transition to peace. The UN Mission in Liberia has a robust mandate to monitor and uphold human rights and protect civilians.” [3](p 5)

6.3 The USSD also stated that there had been an improvement in the Government’s attitude to human rights issues since the interim Government came to power. According to this report “There were no reports that the NTGL committed any serious human rights violations in its first few months in office. NTGL officials have publicly stated they would continue to work with the international community toward restructuring and reforming state and local security.” [2a](p 3) However, during 2003 “Rebels fighting in the northwest and the southeast committed numerous serious human rights abuses. The absence of independent observers in rebel-controlled areas made documentation of such abuses difficult.” [2a](p 3)

Freedom of Speech and the Media

6.4 The USSD noted:

“In Monrovia there were 18 newspapers that published during the year [2003], with varying degrees of regularity. Two were independent dailies and five usually appeared at least once a week. Their political orientation ranged between pro-government and critical of the Government. The Public Affairs Bureau of the Ministry of Information, Culture, and Tourism published one newspaper, and the communications network owned by the President published a weekly newspaper. After President Taylor left the country, his newspaper stopped publishing and his radio station stopped broadcasting.” [2a](p 14)

6.5 According to the USSD “Newspaper availability fluctuated during the year [2003]. All newspapers were printed through one printing facility. The Taylor administration had at times pressured the managers of the facility not to print articles the Government perceived to be unfavorable. To meet the costs of production, the typical newspaper’s eight pages included two or three pages of advertisements or paid announcements. Some articles were the result of gifts or money that supplemented reporters’ meager salaries.” [2a](p 14)

6.6 Liberia’s media is highly dependent on radio. According to the USSD:

“Due to the high price of newspapers, the high rate of illiteracy (estimated at 75 percent), high transportation costs, and the poor state of roads elsewhere in the country, newspaper distribution generally was limited to the Monrovia region. As a result, radio was the primary means of mass communication. There were a number of FM stations in Monrovia. There also was the state-run national station (ELBC), a FM station operated by President Taylor’s private Liberia Communications Network (LCN), which closed after Taylor left. There were at least five new FM stations on the airwaves: Power FM, King’s

FM, UNMIL Radio, and Radio LIJ. ELBC, and Radio Veritas, which was operated under the Catholic Archdiocese, also broadcast on short-wave frequencies strong enough to reach all parts of the country. In November, Chairman Bryant lifted the ban on Star Radio, an independent radio station closed by former President Taylor in 2000. DC-101 was broadcasting at year's end [2003], and UNMIL Radio also began broadcasting in December [2003].” [2a](p 14) The same report noted that “Call-in radio talk shows were popular and frequently a forum for both government and opposition viewpoints. Interviews with prominent persons were broadcast frequently. DC-101 removed its popular talk show DC Talk off the air after government operatives threatened the show's host and the station management for condoning and preaching anti-government sentiments.” [2a](p 14)

6.7 Access to other forms of electronic media is limited. The USSD noted “Television was limited to those who could purchase sets, the generators, and fuel to provide electricity. For those persons and businesses with satellite capability, CNN was generally available. There were two television stations: LCN, owned by then-President Taylor, and the Ducor Broadcasting Corporation, which was privately owned but supplied with a generator by President Taylor. LCN closed down after Taylor's August 11 [2003] departure from office. Ducor radio FM101 and television closed during the June-August fighting and resumed broadcasting after the fighting.” [2a](p 15) The report added “The Government did not specifically restrict or limit access to the Internet; it was available to those who could afford it. Several Internet cafes operated in Monrovia, although relatively high fees limited access. Prior to President Taylor's resignation, the Government continued to charge that opponents used the Internet to wage a propaganda war. However, the Ministry of Information also maintained an unofficial website that promoted a pro-government view of the country. Two Internet Service Providers (ISPs) operated in Monrovia and both were linked to prominent persons. Some persons believed that government security personnel monitored the Internet, particularly e-mail.” [2a](p 16)

6.8 In 2003 the Government was generally tolerant of the media, the USSD observed:

“With some notable exceptions, government officials reluctantly tolerated the press; however, they frequently criticized the media publicly for what they considered negative reporting. Requirements for foreign journalists, including a minimum 72-hour advance notice of the intent to enter the country and a 24-hour waiting period for accreditation after arrival remained in force. During the crisis, international correspondents were charged frequent and irregular accreditation fees. In mid-June [2003], the Government suspended all foreign press credentials for 2 days in response to an article accusing then-President Taylor of “returning to cannibalism.” The Government attempted to intimidate some journalists during that period. The Government order that required local journalists to clear reporting on the insurgency prior to publication, generally was obeyed out of fear of government retribution.” [2a](p 15)

6.9 In the second half of 2003, the Government demonstrated a more co-operative attitude to the media, particularly the international media. The USSD noted “From July [2003] until year's end [2003], government cooperation with the media,

particularly the international media, improved. The Government permitted a significant volume of reporting on the crisis with little censorship. However, local media did not publish during this period. Following President Taylor's resignation, local press returned to publishing and broadcasting, and government harassment and interference was significantly reduced from earlier in the year [2003]." [2a](p 15)

The EIU in its country profile on Liberia of July 2004, noted "Liberia's state television station, ELTV, was off the air for most of the war, but has resumed broadcasting as a largely commercial station. There are two private television stations broadcasting for short periods of the day and several FM radio stations in the capital, which are often prone to government shutdowns. Few stations have a national reach. International radio stations, especially the BBC World Service and the US Voice of America, are widely listened to. There are numerous independent newspapers, but press freedom under the Taylor government was not largely tolerated, although some improvements are expected under the new government." [4b](p 20)

Journalists

6.10 Reporters Without Borders (Reporters sans frontières) in their report on Liberia covering 2003 noted:

"The war that raged during the summer of 2003 between forces loyal to former President Charles Taylor and the rebels of the LURD (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy) and MODEL (Movement for Democracy in Liberia) had serious repercussions on the Liberian press. All the newspapers stopped appearing at one point or another. The premises of the main privately-owned daily newspapers and radio stations were destroyed or ransacked by combatants. Many journalists fled the capital and went into hiding or abroad. Even the news media that escaped ransacking suffered catastrophic financial losses as all of the country's economic activities were paralysed for three months. Nonetheless, some 15 newspapers were back on sale a few weeks after the war ended. Most opted to publish weekly because they could not afford a daily edition. Advertisers became so scarce that air time on a commercial radio station could be obtained for 10 dollars a minute in September." [19](p 1)

6.11 The USSD noted:

"There were several attacks on the press during the year [2003] by unknown persons. For example, on June 5 [2003], armed men assaulted and robbed The News reporter Stanley McGill. A week earlier, three armed men who appeared to be wearing ATU uniforms assaulted him. On June 12 [2003], alleged LURD rebels abducted three journalists, Bobby Tapson and Bill Jarkloh, both of the The News, and Joe Watson of the Liberia Broadcasting System. The three men were reported released several days later. On June 12 [2003], armed men looted the home of Independent journalist Lyndon Ponnio. The whereabouts of his family was unknown at year's end [2003]. The MFWA [Media Foundation of West Africa] reported that the homes of three other journalists had been looted and set ablaze in June [2003]." [2a](p 16)

6.12 Reporters Without Borders also noted in its report covering 2003:

“Shortly after being appointed to lead the National Transition Government of Liberia (NTGL) at the end of August [2003], Gyude Bryant lifted a ban on the privately-owned Star Radio dating back to March 2000. He asked the press to go back to work in order to inform the public about the peace process now under way. However, the press group owned by former President Charles Taylor, consisting of a daily newspaper, a radio station, a TV station, a printing works and an Internet Service Provider, collapsed after he went into exile. Some employees, who had not been paid for several months, stole the most valuable equipment.” [19](p 1)

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Freedom of Religion

6.13 The USSD Religious Freedom Report 2003 stated “The Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government generally respects this right in practice; however, there were some exceptions. There is no established state religion. However, government ceremonies invariably open and close with prayer and may include the singing of hymns. The prayers and hymns usually are Christian but occasionally are Muslim.” [2b](p 1)

6.14 According to the USSD Religious Freedom Report 2003, “All organizations, including religious groups, must register their articles of incorporation with the Government, along with a statement of the purpose of the organization; however, traditional indigenous religious groups are not required to register, and generally do not register. Registration is routine, and there have been no reports that the registration process is burdensome or discriminatory in its administration.” [2b](p 1)

6.15 The USSD Religious Freedom Report 2003 stated:

“After Charles Taylor became President, he effectively divided the National Muslim Council by working behind the scenes to seed the Council with his loyalists. Specifically, to undermine the independence of the Council, President Taylor sponsored the expulsion of Sheik Kafumba Konneh as Chairman and engineered the subsequent appointment of Alhaji Jakiray Taylor as Chairman, one of his loyalists within the country's Islamic Community. Alhaji Jakaity Taylor's position has been vacant since his death in late April. The National Muslim Council of Liberia remains divided between Taylor's supporters and Sheik Kafumba Konneh's supporters. In his capacity as Chairman of the National Muslim Council, Sheik Kafumba Konneh joined the Inter-Religious Council of Liberia (IRC), a well-known organization led by Archbishop Francis that has tried to coordinate peace efforts between the Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) and rebels and the government, as Vice President. He has retained that position on the Inter-Religious Council (IRC) despite losing the Chair of the National Muslim Council.” [2b](pp 1-2)

6.16 According to the USSD Religious Freedom Report 2003:

“Although the law prohibits religious discrimination, Islamic leaders complained of government discrimination against Muslims. Although there are some Muslims in senior government positions, many Muslims believe that they are bypassed for desirable jobs. Many Muslim business proprietors believe that the Government's decision to enforce an old statute prohibiting business on Sunday discriminates against them. Most Mandingos, and hence most Muslims, were allied with factions that opposed Taylor during the 1989–1996 civil war and still belong to opposition parties.” [2b](p 2)

6.17 Ritualised murder has also been reported, but given the nature of these activities there is little information on them. According to the USSD Religious Freedom Report 2003:

“Little reliable information is readily available about traditional associated with ritual (sic) killings. Ritual killings, in which body parts used in traditional indigenous rituals are removed from the victim, continued to occur. The number of such killings was difficult to ascertain, since police often described deaths as accidents even when body parts were removed. Deaths that appear to be natural or accidental sometimes are rumored to be the work of ritual killers. It is believed that practitioners of traditional indigenous religions among the Grebo and Krahn ethnic groups concentrated in the southeastern counties most commonly engage in ritual killings. The victims usually are members of the religious group performing the ritual and body parts are removed from a member whom the group believes to be powerful are believed to be the most effective ritually. Body parts most frequently removed include the heart, liver, and genitals. The rituals have been reported in some cases to entail eating body parts, and the underlying religious beliefs may be related to incidents during the civil war in which faction leaders sometimes ate (and in which one faction leader had himself filmed eating) body parts of former leaders of rival factions. Removal of body parts for use in traditional rituals is believed to be the motive for ritual killings, rather than an abuse incidental to killings committed for other motives. Ritual murders for the purpose of obtaining body parts traditionally were committed by religious group members called "heart men;" however, since the civil war, common criminals also may sell body parts.” [2b](pp 2&3)

In March 2004, the BBC reported that women in Monrovia had protested against these killings, and the authorities' failure to arrest those responsible. There appears to have been an upsurge in these murders, with children being targeted, but a lack of resources has hampered an effective response to these crimes. [7c]

Religious groups

6.18 the USSD Religious Freedom Report 2003 noted “As much as 40 percent of the population practice either Christianity or elements of both Christianity and traditional indigenous religions. Approximately 40 percent practice traditional indigenous religions exclusively. Approximately 20 percent of the population practice Islam,

although Islam continued to gain adherents. The Lutheran, Baptist, Episcopalian, Presbyterian, Roman Catholic, United Methodist, African Methodist Episcopal (AME), and AME Zion denominations, as well as several Pentecostal churches are represented in the Christian community. Some of the Pentecostal movements are independent, while others are affiliated with churches outside the country. There also is a small Baha'i community." [2b](p 1)

6.19 The same USSD report added "Christianity, traditional indigenous religions, and syncretistic religions combining elements of both Christianity and traditional indigenous religions are found throughout the country. Islam is prevalent only among members of the Mandingo ethnic group, who are concentrated in the northern and eastern counties, and among the Vai ethnic group in the northwest." [2b](p 1)

Freedom of Assembly & Association

6.20 The USSD noted "The Constitution provides for the right of peaceful assembly, and the Government at times limited this right in practice. During the second half of the year [2003], neither President Blah nor the NTGL limited gatherings, and few of such gatherings occurred." [2a](p 16)

6.21 The USSD also reported "The Government generally permitted demonstrations during the year. However, in June and July [2003], as the crisis in Monrovia worsened, there were a number of spontaneous demonstrations that the Government tried to forcibly prevent. There were also several clashes between demonstrators seeking peace and international assistance, and pro-government demonstrators. On July 3 [2003], anti-Taylor demonstrators rallied outside a foreign Embassy. Government security services clashed with some of the demonstrators to prevent them from moving to the Embassy, and beat some civilians." [2a](p 17)

6.22 According to the USSD, "The Constitution provides for the right of association, and the Government generally respected this right in practice. There were 18 political parties registered by year's end [2003]. Dozens of civil society organizations, organized around themes such as human rights, women's issues, development objectives, poverty alleviation, health concerns, and worker's associations were active." [2a](p 17)

Employment Rights

6.23 The USSD noted "the Constitution provides workers, except members of the military and police, the right to associate in trade unions, and workers exercised this right in practice. The Constitution also provides that unions are prohibited from engaging in partisan political activity; however, government interference in union activities, especially union elections and leadership struggles, was common both before and during the civil war." [2a](p 24)

6.24 The USSD also noted:

"Although most economic activity was interrupted by the conflict, unions proliferated. There were approximately 30 functioning unions organized

loosely under two-umbrella groups, the Liberian Federation of Labor Unions (LFLU) and the Congress of Liberian Trade Unions (CLTU), with the common objective of protecting the rights of their 60,000 members, who largely were unemployed. The actual power that the unions exercised was extremely limited. Since the country's work force largely was illiterate, economic activities beyond the subsistence level were very limited, and the labor laws tended to favor management.” [2a](pp 24-25)

6.25 According to the USSD, “During the year [2003], the Government strictly enforced the union registration requirements that fell into disuse during the war. Applicants needed to register at two different ministries, and processing time was arbitrary. Some groups received official status in only a few days while the Government never issued registration for others.” [2a](p 17) The report added that, “the law does not prohibit anti-union discrimination; however, under the Taylor administration, there were discriminations against union activities. Labor unions traditionally have been affiliated with international labor groups such as the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions.” [2a](p 25)

6.26 While the union membership is generally allowed, the USSD noted, “With the exception of civil servants, workers (including employees of public corporations and autonomous agencies) have the right to organize and bargain collectively. These rights largely were unused during the year [2003] because of the lack of economic activity.” [2a](p 25) The report added that “Labor laws provide for the right to strike. The laws were nullified by a 1984 People's Redemption Council decree that outlawed strikes, but that decree has not been enforced for years. Due to the destruction of the economy and the estimated 80 percent unemployment rate, strikes were infrequent.” [2a](p 25)

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People Trafficking

6.27 The USSD noted “The law does not prohibit trafficking in persons, and there were reports that persons were trafficked to, from, and within the country. There were reports of forced labor, including by children, and the recruitment of child soldiers Citizens, including children, have been trafficked to the Cote d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, the Gambia, and the United Kingdom, in some cases for commercial sexual exploitation.” [2a](p 27)

Freedom of Movement

6.28 The USSD noted “The Constitution provides for these rights; however, government elements, the LURD, and MODEL restricted them in practice. Government security forces, LURD, and MODEL maintained checkpoints where travelers routinely were subjected to arbitrary searches and petty extortion; there were some reports that members of the SOD raped persons at checkpoints. Government security forces, LURD, and MODEL were also accused of beating and robbing IDPs [Internally Displaced Persons] fleeing fighting throughout the country.” [2a](p 19) After President Taylor stood down from office the same report noted “In

October [2003], President Blah suspended the requirement of exit visas for citizens to leave the country. Passport services remained partially suspended during the year [2003]. Prospective travelers were able to obtain passports through irregular means, such as contacting an associate of President Taylor and paying a bribe.” [2a](p 19)

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6.B Human Rights - Specific Groups

Ethnic Groups

6.29 The CIA factbook of May 2004 gave the following breakdown of the ethnic groups in Liberia, “indigenous African tribes 95% (including Kpelle, Bassa, Gio, Kru, Grebo, Mano, Krahn, Gola, Gbandi, Loma, Kissi, Vai, Dei, Bella, Mandingo, and Mende), Americo-Liberians 2.5% (descendants of immigrants from the US who had been slaves), Congo People 2.5% (descendants of immigrants from the Caribbean who had been slaves) There are 16 ethnic groups, and these indigenous tribes are the Kpelle, Bassa, Gio, Kru, Grebo, Mano, Krahn, Gola, Gbandi, Loma, Kissi, Vai, Dei, Bella, Mandingo, and Mende.” [6](p 4)

6.30 The USSD background note of June 2004, noted that “the Kpelle in central and western Liberia is the largest ethnic group. Americo-Liberians who are descendants of freed slaves that arrived in Liberia early in 1821 make up an estimated 5% of the population. There also are sizable numbers of Lebanese, Indians, and other West African nationals who make up a significant part of Liberia's business community.” [2c](p 2) The USSD noted “the country was ethnically diverse and has 16 indigenous ethnic groups. The indigenous ethnic groups generally spoke distinct primary languages and were concentrated regionally. No ethnic group constituted a majority of the population.” [2a](p 24)

6.31 The USSD also noted “Although the Constitution prohibits ethnic discrimination, it also provides that only “persons who are Negroes or of Negro descent” may be citizens or own land. Many persons of Lebanese and Asian descent who were born or have lived most of their lives in the country were denied full rights as a result of this racial distinction.” [2a](p 24)[17b](pp 1-2)

Mandingos

6.32 The USSD noted that many members of the predominantly Muslim Mandingo minority encountered hostility from the Taylor regime, which viewed them as being opposed to his rule. There was also ethnic tension in recent years, between the Mandingos and the Lormas in Lofa County. [2a](pp 2&24) The USSD, and British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) in a profile of June 2003, noted that LURD had drawn much of its support from the Mandingos, and its success has allowed some of them to return to Lofa country, and parts of Bong and Nimba counties, which are under LURD control. [2a](p 24)[7a](pp 1-2)

Krahn

6.33 The USSD background note on Liberia of June 2004, that the Krahn are a southern based ethnic group, who held considerable power under the Doe regime, when Krahn dominated both the Government and the armed forces. This caused resentment, and was one of the reasons for the unpopularity of the Doe regime. [2c](p 2-3) The BBC, in its profile of June 2003, noted that MODEL had drawn much of its support from the Krahn tribe. [7a](p 1-2)

Women

6.34 The USSD noted “Domestic violence against women was widespread; however, the Government, the courts, the media, LURD, or MODEL did not seriously address it as a problem. Several NGOs in Monrovia and Buchanan continued programs to treat abused women and girls and increase awareness of their rights.” [2a](p 22)

6.35 The USSD also noted that FGM continues to be common in Liberia:

“FGM traditionally was performed on young girls in northern, western, and central ethnic groups, particularly in rural areas. Prior to the onset of the civil war in 1989, approximately 50 percent of women in rural areas between the ages of 8 and 18 were subjected to FGM. Social structures and traditional institutions, such as the secret societies that often performed FGM as an initiation rite, were undermined by the war. While many experts believed that the incidence of FGM dropped to as low as 10 percent. Traditional societies were reestablishing themselves throughout the country, and the practice of FGM continued. The most extreme form of FGM, infibulation, was not practiced. The Government took no action against FGM during the year [2003]. The Association of Female Lawyers in Liberia (AFELL) also spoke out against FGM.” [2a](p 22)

6.36 The USSD reported that the position of women in society, sometimes led to their rights being curtailed:

“Women married under civil law can inherit land and property; however, women married under traditional laws were considered the properties of their husbands and were not entitled to inherit from their husbands or retain custody of their children if their husbands die. The Government prohibits polygamy; however, traditional laws permit men to have more than one wife. Women's organizations, particularly AFELL, continued to press for legislation on behalf of inheritance rights in traditional marriages. The Liberian chapter of the Mano River Women's Peace Network visited neighboring countries in 2002 to promote regional peace and stability.” [2a](pp 22-23)

6.37 While women rights may not be fully respected, the USSD reported “During the year [2003], professional women's groups—including lawyers, market women, and businesswomen—remained vocal about their concerns regarding government corruption, the economy, security abuses, rape, domestic violence, and children's rights. Government officials often responded negatively to public criticism.” [2a](p 23)

Children

6.38 The USSD noted “The law prohibits the employment of children under the age of 16 during school hours in the wage sector, but enforcement was lax and child labor was a serious and widespread problem. The Ministry of Labor frequently lacked the resources to carry out its mandate. Throughout rural areas, particularly where there were no schools, small children continued to assist their parents as vendors in local markets or on the streets, to take care of younger brothers and sisters, and to work on family subsistence farms.” [2a](p 26)

6.39 The USSD also noted “Some former combatants, including some in the security forces, were accused of forcing children to work in the mining industry. Human rights groups reported instances of forced child labor in some rural areas, particularly in alluvial diamond mining. A child rights advocacy group's report on child labor in the southeastern counties and that of another prominent human rights group contradicted a government report, issued in 2002, which concluded that there was no conclusive evidence of forced child labor. Subsequently legislators from three counties sued the child rights advocacy group for defaming the counties' reputations. At year's end [2003], the case remained pending.” [2a](p 26)

6.40 The USSD stated “Government and rebel forces forcibly conscripted persons, including children, to serve as porters, forced laborers, combatants, and sex slaves. There were credible reports that the commanders of these children used narcotics and cocaine to induce the children to fight and to kill. The various armed militias continued to recruit forcibly from IDP [Internally Displaced Persons] camps and schools and deploy underage soldiers, including girls. Some children were as young as 9 years old. There were an estimated 15,000 child soldiers in the country. UNICEF reported that in some factions, 70 percent of combatants were children. In June [2003], government forces attempted to forcibly conscript dozens of young men from the streets of Monrovia, and take them to military camps where they were to be armed and sent to fight. There were credible reports that the LURD engaged in similar forced recruitment and deployment tactics. Thousands of child soldiers have yet to be demobilized or disarmed.” [2a](p 23)

6.41 The USSD also noted “There were thousands of children living on the street of Monrovia; however, it is difficult to tell who were street children, ex-combatants, or IDPs. Approximately 100 under-funded orphanages operated in and around Monrovia; however, many orphans lived outside these institutions. These institutions did not receive any government funding, but relied on private donations. Nearly all youths witnessed terrible atrocities, and some committed atrocities themselves.” [2a](pp 23-24)

Homosexuals

6.42 Both male and female homosexuality is illegal. There are no reports of it being widely tolerated by society, or of there being a homosexual culture in Liberia. [13a](pp 1-4)[13b](pp 1-4)

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6.C Human Rights - Other Issues

Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)

6.43 According to the US State Department's Report on Human Rights Practices (USSD) covering 2003:

"The law provides for the granting of asylum and refugee status to persons who meet the definition in the 1951 U.N. Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. In practice, the Government provided protection against refoulement and granted refugee status or asylum. The Government provided temporary protection to nearly 20,000 refugees, the vast majority of whom were from Sierra Leone. Between 10,000 to 15,000 refugees from Sierra Leone repatriated during the year [2003]. The Government generally cooperated with the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations in assisting refugees; however, government elements, LURD, and MODEL allegedly were responsible for hundreds of cases of abuse against individual refugees."

[2a](p 19)

6.44 The UNHCR, in a press release of 21 July 2004, stated that their program of repatriating Sierra Leonean nationals from countries within the West African region had now ended. The report stated:

"Some 25,000 Sierra Leonean refugees have repatriated since the start of this year, mainly from Guinea and Liberia, but also in smaller numbers from other countries like Mali, Senegal, Ghana, Nigeria and the Gambia. Overall, since the repatriation began in 2001, UNHCR has assisted some 178,000 refugees return home with a further 92,000 preferring to find their own way back to Sierra Leone. An estimated 15,000 refugees from Sierra Leone have opted to stay in their host countries and integrate locally. In the countries with larger numbers of refugees deciding to stay, UNHCR will help with integration through community based projects."

[17c](p 1)

6.45 According to a UNHCR press release of 25 August 2004:

"Refugee camps in Sierra Leone, Guinea, Côte d'Ivoire and Ghana host some 350,000 Liberians, some of whom first went there in late 1989 when Taylor began an insurgency against the government of President Samuel Doe that left some 200,000 people dead and forced nearly 1 million from their homes in the ensuing years. Camps for internally displaced people, or IDPs, in Liberia still shelter around 300,000 Liberians who have been unable to return to their homes because of lack of basic necessities – such as schools, clinics, water and electricity – and insecurity."

[17d](p 1)

6.46 The UN Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN), in an article dated 4 August 2004, quoted comments made by the deputy head of UNHCR in Liberia Mr Golam Abbas. On the subject of repatriating Liberians, he said "It is important to

ensure that security situation is conducive in the counties of return so that the returnees would not experience any form of insecurity," he told IRIN.' He also said that the UNHCR was not going to force any refugee to return home. The article also noted "The UNHCR official said about 50,000 refugees had already returned spontaneously to Liberia from Guinea, Sierra Leone and other countries in the West Africa, since a peace agreement in August 2003 led the United Nations to send in 15,000 peacekeepers." [5e](p 1&2)

6.47 The UNHCR press release of 25 August 2004 added "With large numbers of Liberians from refugee and IDP camps returning home on their own despite the daunting challenges, UNHCR is launching a programme to facilitate the return of those who wish to repatriate from the camps. Next month [i.e. September 2004], a registration will start in the neighbouring countries under this programme. The first organised convoys are expected to bring home refugees in October [2004]." [17d](p 2)

United Nations

6.48 The Foreign and Commonwealth (FCO) in their country profile on Liberia dated 12 January 2004, reported that Liberia is referred to under Security Council Resolution 1343 (2001), and is subject to a sanction regime. The reason for this action is because of the Taylor Government's support for RUF in Sierra Leone. Under this resolution the export of diamonds is proscribed, and there is an embargo on the importation of arms. [3](p 4)[7b](pp 1-2) Some Liberians and foreign nationals are also subject to a visa ban, because of their involvement with RUF, and in UN proscribed activities within Liberia. [18a](pp 4&5)[18e](p 3)

6.49 On the 1 August 2003, the UN Security Council sanctioned the deployment of a multi-national peacekeeping force to the region. This was at the request of the UN Secretary General, and adopted as Resolution 1497 (2003). [18b](pp 1-3) Under Resolution 1509 (2003), a United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) was sanctioned for a period of twelve months. This resolution stated that UNMIL was to be made up of 15,000 peacekeepers, whose primary mission is to monitor the peace agreement, and assist in the maintenance of law and order. [18c](p 3)

6.50 The UN mission has now fully deployed. UNMIL reported that the number of personnel deployed in Liberia at the end of July 2004, was "15,174 total uniformed personnel, including 13,881 troops and 202 military observers; 1,091 civilian police supported by 412 international civilian personnel and 526 local staff." [18g](p 1)

Humanitarian situation

6.51 Human Rights Watch reported that the provisions of the peace agreement of 18 August 2003, and noted that in early August 2003, noted the deployment of the first units of the ECOMIL peacekeeping force. [16a](p 3) The Secretary General of the United Nations in his first report on UNMIL deployment in December 2003 noted:-

"UNMIL took over peacekeeping responsibilities from ECOMIL on 1 October [2003], as stipulated in Security Council resolution 1509 (2003). All of the approximately 3,600 ECOMIL troops, comprising contingents from Benin, the

Gambia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Mali, Nigeria, Senegal and Togo, were reassigned to UNMIL as United Nations peacekeepers. The newly designated UNMIL troops remained in the deployment areas established by ECOMIL in Monrovia, as well as on the main roads leading into the city and along the Kakata-Totota and Monrovia-Buchanan roads. Shortly after UNMIL took over from ECOMIL, the United States of America withdrew the significant military capabilities it had positioned off the coast of Liberia in August to support the ECOMIL forces.” [18d](p 1)

6.52 The UN peacekeeping force does not have control over the whole of the country, and rebel groups control some border crossing points. This makes it difficult to police smuggling of weapons and Liberian resources, including diamonds, from rebel controlled areas. IRIN, in their article dated 4 August 2004, highlighted concerns over security in some parts of rural Liberia and the poor state of the country's infrastructure, which will limit the number of refugees who will be able to return, from neighbouring West African countries, during the latter part of 2004. The article stated “Abbas [Mr. Golam Abbas] said damaged roads and wrecked bridges meant that Liberia would be unable to cope with a large influx of returning refugees. Housing facilities for them were also limited, he added. He said some refugees interviewed by UNHCR had also expressed concern over the security situation in parts of rural Liberia where gunmen of the LURD and MODEL rebel movements still hold sway and where the UN-supervised disarmament programme has not yet been completed.” [5e](pp 1&2)[5f](p 3)

6.53 IRIN, in an article dated 17 August 2004, noted that while there had been some improvement within the country, conditions remained poor. The article stated:

“The electricity supply network was destroyed in 1990 at the start of the civil war, so the entire country now depends on private generators. These create a constant drone in the Mamba Point diplomatic quarter of Monrovia, where the offices of most UN agencies are situated. These office blocks and the hotels, restaurants, bars and nightclubs which have sprung up around them, are brightly lit by night, but most of the rest of Liberia remains in silent darkness.” The report added “Every hospital, school and public building has been stripped bare by war-time looting. Some of the street vendors selling soft drinks in Monrovia keep their bottles cool in special refrigerated boxes that were originally intended to preserve vaccines. The port of Monrovia is choked with wrecks and has been ransacked to the point that it barely functions.” The report also pointed out that “a whole generation of youngsters has been brought up without education. They have only known violence and warfare, often as a fighters (sic) in the conflict themselves. Liberia is one of the few countries in Africa where most parents are more literate than their children.” [5f](pp 4&5)

6.54 In July 2003, the UNHCR requested, in light of the situation within Liberia at that time, that governments suspend the forced return of rejected Liberian asylum seekers for at least six months. [17a](p 2) As of August 2004, an estimated 50,000 Liberians have spontaneously returned to Liberia from neighbouring countries, and the UNHCR is assisting them. The UNHCR intends to start a formal returns program, from countries in the region, in October 2004. [5e](p 1)[17d](p 2)

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Chronology of major events

Pre 1847 - Liberia is the only West African country never to have had formal colonial status, and up to the end of the 18th century the various indigenous groups were left comparatively undisturbed by outsiders. Early in the 19th century rights to the territory were bought by United States philanthropic organisations, which wanted to use the area as a haven for the growing American free black population. From 1821 onwards, freed slaves from the US were resettled along parts of what is now Liberia's coast. The capital Monrovia was founded in 1822 as haven for freed slaves from Americas, and is named after the American President James Monroe

1847 - Constitution modelled on that of the United States of America drawn up.

1847 July - Liberia becomes independent under President J J Roberts.

1917 - Liberia declares war on Germany, giving the Allies a base in West Africa.

1926 - Firestone Tyre and Rubber Company opens rubber plantation on land granted by government. Rubber production becomes backbone of economy.

1936 - Forced-labour practices abolished.

1943 - William Tubman elected president.

1944 - Government declares war on the Axis powers.

1951 May - Women and indigenous property owners vote in the presidential election for the first time.

1958 - Racial discrimination outlawed.

1971 - Tubman dies and is succeeded by William Tolbert Jr.

1974 - Government accepts aid from the Soviet Union for the first time.

1978 - Liberia signs trade agreement with the European Economic Community.

1979 - More than 40 people are killed in riots following a proposed increase in the price of rice.

1980 - Master Sergeant Samuel Doe stages military coup. Tolbert and 13 of his aides are publicly executed. A People's Redemption Council headed by Doe suspends constitution and assumes full powers.

1984 - Doe's regime allows return of political parties following pressure from the United States and other creditors.

1985 - Doe wins presidential election.

1989 - National Patriotic Front of Liberia (NPFL) led by Charles Taylor begins an uprising against the government.

1990 - Economic Community of West African States (Ecowas) sends peacekeeping force. Doe is executed by a splinter group of the NPFL.

1991 - Ecowas and the NPFL agree to disarm and set up an Interim Government of National Unity.

1992 - The NPFL launches an all-out assault on West African peacekeepers in Monrovia, the latter respond by bombing NPFL positions outside the capital and pushing the NPFL back into the countryside.

1993 - The warring factions draw up a plan for a National Transitional Government and a cease-fire, but this fails to materialise and fighting resumes.

1994 - The warring factions agree on a timetable for disarmament and the setting up of a joint Council of State.

1995 - Peace agreement signed.

1996 April - Factional fighting resumes and spreads to Monrovia.

1996 August - West African peacekeepers initiate disarmament programme, clear land mines and reopen roads, allowing refugees to return.

1997 July - Presidential and legislative elections held. Charles Taylor wins a landslide and his National Patriotic Party wins a majority of seats in the National Assembly. International observers declare the elections free and fair.

1999 January - Ghana and Nigeria accuse Liberia of supporting Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels in Sierra Leone. Britain and the US threaten to suspend aid to Liberia.

1999 April - Rebel forces thought to have come from Guinea attack town of Voinjama. Fighting displaces more than 25,000 people.

1999 September - Guinea accuses Liberian forces of entering its territory and attacking border villages.

2000 September - Liberian forces launch "massive offensive" against rebels in the north. Liberia accuses Guinean troops of shelling border villages.

2001 February - Liberian government says Sierra Leonean rebel leader Sam Bockarie, also known as Mosquito, has left the country.

2001 May - UN Security Council reimposes arms embargo to punish Taylor for trading weapons for diamonds from rebels in Sierra Leone.

2002 January - More than 50,000 Liberians and Sierra Leonean refugees flee fighting.

2002 February - Taylor declares a state of emergency.

2002 September - President Taylor lifts an eight-month state of emergency and a ban on political rallies, citing a reduced threat from rebels.

2003 March - Rebels open several battlefronts and advance to within 10km of Monrovia. Tens of thousands of people displaced by fighting.

2003 June - Talks in Ghana aimed at ending rebellion overshadowed by indictment accusing President Taylor of war crimes over his alleged backing of rebels in Sierra Leone.

2003 July - Fighting intensifies; rebels battle for control of Monrovia. Several hundred people are killed. West African regional group Ecowas agrees to provide peacekeepers.

2003 August - Nigerian peacekeepers arrive. Charles Taylor leaves Liberia after handing power to his deputy Moses Blah. US troops arrive. Interim government, rebels sign peace accord in Ghana. Gyude Bryant chosen to head interim administration from October.

2003 September/October - US forces pull out. UN launches major peacekeeping mission, deploying thousands of troops.

2003 October - Gyude Bryant sworn in as head of state.

2003 December - UN peacekeepers begin to disarm former combatants, deploy in rebel territory outside Monrovia. This was suspended due to violence, and a lack of adequate preparation to facilitate this program.

2004 February - International donors pledge more than \$500m in reconstruction aid.

2004 March - UN Security Council votes to freeze assets of Charles Taylor.

Mid July 2004 - The UN Integrated Regional Information Network (IRIN) reported that over 54,000 former combatants had disarmed, since the disarmament program was restarted in April 2004.

Adapted from the BBC timeline dated 1 June 2004, Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Liberian country profile of July 2004, and IRIN report

Sources [4b][7d][5d]

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Political Organisations

- ALCOP** (All Liberian Coalition Party)
Chair David Kortie, it came third in the 19 July 1997 elections, winning 4% of the vote, with two seats in the Senate and three in the House of Representatives. ALCOP was original form from former members of ULIMO-K (United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia-Kromah), under the leadership of Alhaji G V Kromah. [1](p 624)[10](p 301)
- APP** (Alliance of Political Parties)
Alliance comprising the LAP (Liberia Action Party) and the LUP (Liberia Unification Party), it participated in the 19 July 1997 elections, obtaining two seats in the House of Representatives. [1](p 624)
- ECOWAS** (Economic Community of West African States)
The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) was established in 1975 by 15 West African countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, The Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo. Cape Verde joined ECOWAS in 1977, and Mauritania withdrew in early 2000. The community's principal objective is to establish a customs union and a common market to promote the free movement of goods and people within West Africa. ECOWAS has an executive secretariat headed by a Ghanaian former minister, Mohamed Ibn Chambas, a 120-member parliament and a court of justice, all based in the Nigerian capital, Abuja. Decision-making powers are vested in a council of ministers and a chairman (who is elected annually—currently the president of Ghana, John Agyekum Kufuor); supreme authority rests with the annual conference of heads of state and government. [4b](p 39)
- LPP** (Liberia People's Party)
Led by Togba Nah-Tipoteh, it won 1.6% of the vote in the 19 July 1997 elections, obtaining one seat in the House of Representatives. [1](p 624)[10](p 301)
- LURD** (Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy)
A group that was opposed to former President Taylor and its leader is Sekou Damate Conneh. In August 2003, LURD signed a peace agreement with the Liberian Government, which provided for its inclusion in a power-sharing administration. [1](p 625)
- MODEL** (Movement for Democracy in Liberia)
A group that was opposed to former President Taylor and its members are mostly drawn from the Krahn tribe. MODEL is led by Thomas Nimely Yaya. In August 2003, MODEL signed a peace agreement with the Liberian Government, which provided for its inclusion in a power-

sharing administration. [1](p 625)

- NDPL** (National Democratic Party of Liberia)
Led by Dr. George E. Saigbe Boley and a participant in the 19 July 1997 elections. [1](p 625)
- NPFL** (National Patriotic Front of Liberia)
Formed in 1989, it began the civil war under the leadership of Charles Taylor, with an invasion into Nimba county that led to its control of large parts of Liberia. It acquired largely Gio and Mano membership, and is said to have been responsible for a number of atrocities committed against members of the Krahn and Mandingo ethnic groups. Between 1990 and 1994, it controlled the bulk of Liberian territory, but ceased to be active in January 1997. In 1990, a substantial faction of the NPFL split from Taylor, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia, but this group collapsed in 1992. [1](pp 603-605)
- NPP** (National Patriotic Party)
Led by Charles Taylor, it won approximately 75% of the total vote, obtaining 21 out of the 26 seats in the Senate and 49 out of 64 in the House of Representatives in the 19 July 1997 elections. [1](pp 624&625)[10](p 301)
- NTGL** (National Transitional Government of Liberia)
A transitional Government, which took over from the interim government of Moses Blah on 14 October 2003. The Government is made up of representatives from LURD, MODEL, the former Taylor government, civil society and political parties. The NTGL is led by, former businessman, Gyude Bryant. The main task of the government is to rebuild governance institutions and to organise elections by October 2005. [1](p 623&624)[3](p 2)
- ULIMO** (United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia)
Formed in 1991, by supporters of the late President Samuel Doe and members of the Liberian army. Split into two factions in 1994: ULIMO-J and ULIMO-K. Both factions of ULIMO would appear to have fully disbanded prior to the election in 1997. [1](p 603)[10](pp 300&301)
- ULIMO-J** (United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia-Johnson)
A faction of the original ULIMO, led by Roosevelt Johnson. In early 1996, ULIMO-J officials announced Johnson's deposition, resulting in a further split between Johnson's supporters and those loyal to the new leadership. [1](p 604)
- ULIMO-K** (United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia-Kromah)
A faction of the original ULIMO, led by Alhaji G V Kromah since 1994, ceased to be active in January 1997. [1](p 604)
- UNMIL** (United Nation Mission In Liberia)

On 19 September 2003, the United Nations Security Council passed resolution 1509 authorising a 15,000 strong Peacekeeping force to provide security in Liberia. UNMIL began to deploy on 1 October 2003. UNMIL has a broad and robust mandate covering peacekeeping, criminal justice, human rights, child protection, Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR), and public information. [3](p 3)

UP

(Unity Party)

Led by Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf, it was the runner-up in the 19 July 1997 elections, but won only 9.6% of the total vote, thereby obtaining three seats in the Senate and seven in the House of Representatives.

[1](pp 624 &265)

UPP

(United People's Party)

Led by Wesley Johnson, it won approximately 2.5% of the vote in the elections on 19 July 1997, thereby obtaining two seats in the House of Representatives. [1](pp 624 &265)

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Prominent People

BRYANT Gyude

Chairman of the National Transitional Government of Liberia (NTGL). A 55-year-old businessman and member of the Liberia Action Party (LAP), Mr Bryant is also a leader of the Episcopal Church. A member of the Grebo ethnic group of southern Liberia, which remained relatively neutral during the civil war, Mr Bryant graduated in economics from Cuttington University College. [4b](p 14-15)

CONNEH Sekou Damate

A 43-year-old who became head of Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD) owing to his close family connections with LURD's main political and financial backer, Lansana Conté, the president of Guinea. Mr Conneh worked as a tax collector for the Ministry of Finance before fleeing to Guinea in 1990 as a result of the escalating civil war in Liberia. Mr Conneh is a Muslim, born in Gbarnga, a stronghold of Charles Taylor during the 1990s, and is from the Mandingo ethnic group, which is distrusted and persecuted by the National Patriotic Party (NPP). When several veteran Taylor opponents in the Mandingo-dominated rebel movement, Ulimo-K, reorganised themselves as LURD in April 1999, they invited Mr Conneh to become chairman. Since the peace agreement in August 2003, tensions have increased within LURD, and calls have been made for the removal of Mr Conneh. In a press release on 8 January 2004, 40 military commanders demanded his replacement by his, reportedly estranged, wife, Ayesha Keita Conneh. Mrs Keita has long been recognised as the power behind the throne, primarily because of her close relationship with one of the rebel group's main backers, the president of Guinea, Lansana Conté, to whom she serves as a spiritual adviser. The main complaints specified by the commanders included the failure of Mr Conneh to reward them for their military successes against the Taylor regime and the fact that the majority of LURD positions in the NTGL were given to relatives and supporters of Mr Conneh, in many cases reportedly in return for cash payments. A further apparent point of contention was the appointment of the brother of Mr Conneh's estranged wife to the position of assistant finance minister. [4b](p 10&15)

DOE Samuel Kanyon

Former Non-Commissioned Officer in the Armed Forces of Liberia. Led coup against Tolbert government in 1980 and assumed power as leader of the PRC (People's Redemption Council). Publicly executed in September 1990, by a splinter group of the NPFL, the Independent National Patriotic Front of Liberia. [1](p 602-603)

JOHNSON Gen. Roosevelt

Commander of Krahn ULIMO-J (United Liberation Movement for Democracy in Liberia-Johnson) faction, since it split from the original ULIMO in 1994. [1](p 604)

JOHNSON Wesley Momoh

Vice-chairman of the NTGL. A 60-year-old accountancy lecturer and Baptist church elder who has been active in local politics for the past 25 years. Educated in the US,

Mr Johnson is the leader of the opposition United People's Party (UPP). On his return from the US, Mr Johnson helped to form the country's first opposition party, the Progressive Alliance of Liberia, in 1978. Mr Johnson also served as a member of the Interim Legislative Assembly from 1990 to 1994, under the interim government of national unity headed by Amos Sawyer. [4b](p 15)

JOHNSON-SIRLEAF Ellen

Leader of the Unity Party (UP). A former UN economist, she has resided outside the country for long periods (largely in Côte d'Ivoire). She failed to win the vote to become the chairman of the NTGL, but this allows her to stand in the 2005 elections. [4b](p 15)

KROMAH Alhaji G V

Leader of the Mandingo ULIMO-K, since the original ULIMO split in 1994. In the July 1997 elections, he led the ALCOP to third place. [1](pp 604&624)

TAYLOR Charles Ghankay

Ex-president and creator of the former ruling NPP. He led an invasion force in late 1989 from Côte d'Ivoire, which resulted in internecine fighting until elections were held in 1997. He won the presidential election and ruled with an authoritarian zeal. Mr Taylor was a prominent supporter of Sierra Leone's Revolutionary United Front (RUF), which had destabilised the subregion for years. Mr Taylor was forced out of office in August 2003, and is currently living in exile in Nigeria. [4b](p 15)

TIPOTEH Togba Nah

Leader of the Liberian People's Party (LPP). A former university professor and minister of planning, Mr Tipoteh is an influential opposition figure. The only major political opposition leader remaining in the country, and critical of government policies, he is disdained by NPP stalwarts but respected by many Liberians. [4b](p 15)

YAYA Thomas Nimely

The 47-year-old chairman of the Movement for Democracy in Liberia (Model). Mr Yaya, a Krahn, followed his father in becoming a clinical nurse, before moving to the US, where he has lived for the past 20 years and assumed US citizenship. Krahn tribesmen of the former president, Samuel Doe, are believed to form the core of Model's leadership, and the rebel group is widely thought to receive its financial support from Côte d'Ivoire. [4b](p 15)

Adapted from the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) Liberian country profile of July 2004, and the Europa Regional Surveys: Africa South of the Sahara 2004.

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